

**PRIVATE SECTOR
VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL STAKEHOLDER GROUP
01/09/2012, Tumwater
Minutes**

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROVIDERS

Attendees

Robert Gaffney, Gaffney Counseling
Cory Turner, Vocational Connections
Earl Shimogawa, Dura Vocational Services
Bradley Ehrlich, Career Opportunities Group
Gail Vogel, Gail Vogel Consulting
April Poier, Grant & Associates
Lisa Parker, Career Counseling, Inc.
Brad Record, Rainier / Vocational Options, Inc
Ryan Guppy, United Back Care, Inc.
Todd Gendreau, Strategic Consulting Services, Inc.
Dan McKinney, Vista Consulting Services

Absent

Linda Cearley, Integrity Vocational Services

DEPARTMENT OF Labor and Industries / Return to work services

Attendees

Rich Wilson, Program Manager
Rheo Aieta, Vocational Services Quality Review Manager
Don Lane, Vocational Service Specialist Supervisor
Janice Orcutt, Vocational Performance Measure Administrator
Donna Spencer, Management Consultant
Keith Klinger, Policy & Education Coordination
Dana McClintock, PSRS Customer Service Specialist II

Audience Members

Bettie Westcott, Favorite Associates Inc.
Gina Jaeger, Magnitude Consulting
Kari D'Aboy, D'Aboy Career Horizons
Jodi Easley, SCA Pacific Case Management
Jake Gustafson, SCA Pacific Case Management
Jennifer Thorne, SCA Pacific Case Management
Josie Brown, Magnitude Consulting

Cathy Cottingham, People Systems
Coreen Urrutia, People Systems
Kim North, Achieve Consulting Team

Welcome & Review Minutes & Announcements

The 11/14/11 VTSG meeting minutes were reviewed and amended to include additional comments for the section entitled *VRC Declines Plan Development Referral*.

Rheo Aieta—Safety Tip

This meeting's safety topic was *Financial Safety Tips* and included tips on Purse and wallet theft prevention, ATM safety, and identity theft prevention.

Keith Klinger—Vocational Conference

The conference will be held on Friday, March 23, 2012 in Tumwater. The conference brochure and registration form is on "What's New" on the vocational website.

Registration ends on Friday, March 16, 2012. There is no registration fee and lunch is on your own. Conference sign-in begins at 7:30. The conference will end at 4:00. The conference theme is "Reform and Improvement: Building a Better System for Workers and Employers" Speakers will include:

- Keynote--Judy Schurke
- Stay at Work-- Chris Ver Eecke, Stay at Work Outreach
- Structured Settlement Agreements-- Debra Tollefson, Legal Services
- WorkSource Pilot Project --The WorkSource VSS staff
- The AWA Lean Project panel presentation --Claims AWA Lean Team
- The Provider Network--Janet Peterson, Health Services Analysis
- The AWA Eligible Closing Report format--Donna Spencer & Kristine Ostler, Return to Work Services

Rich Wilson—University of WA Study Update

The University of WA 2011 Vocational Improvement Project Legislative Report is now available via the L&I vocational services web site.

Stay At Work Program—Chris Ver Eecke

A previous Stay at Work Program presentation at VTSG was summarized. The agenda today was primarily question and answer. The following key points were noted:

- The “go live” date is 1/10/2012.
- No pre-authorization is needed for reimbursement or will be provided.
- The employer can be reimbursed 50% of wages up to \$10,000 or 66 days.
- Reimbursements can include tuition, equipment, and clothing.
- Tools remain the property of the employer.
- Clothing normally provided by the employer will not be reimbursed (i.e. uniforms).
- There has to be a need for alternate clothing in order to do the light duty job(?).
- Eligibility for benefits requires a job description with a doctor’s approval.
- The program does not deal with time-loss issue, only employer reimbursement.
- The program only applies to State fund claims.

Handouts included the Stay at Work brochure (F243-005-000) and The Complete Stay at Work Guide for employers (F243-006-000).

Vocational Profile—Janice Orcutt

Progress reports are no longer required if a VRC enters a recommendation during the grace period (5 days between the “due” date and the “timely by” date). Now, if a recommendation is entered in CAC during the grace period, the link for the current progress report will disappear. Because no progress report is due, it will not be counted in the Vocational Profile as either timely or not timely. A note will be posted on the “What’s New” page to inform all providers.

There have been a few incidents in the last several weeks when CAC has malfunctioned and made it difficult for VRCs to submit progress reports. This has been inconvenient and frustrating for providers and we sincerely apologize. Our technical team is researching the events to discover root cause(s) and they are working on ways to reduce the frequency, duration and impact of such events in the future.

Meanwhile, there are several things that providers can do to minimize stress and maintain their timeliness scores:

- Focus on the due date, not the “timely by” date. This will give a 5 day cushion if there are problems on the due date.
- If an error message appears immediately after clicking the “Submit” button, and other reports seem to be working fine, there is probably an issue with data, hidden characters or special characters in that report. This can sometimes occur with copy and paste text. Try typing directly into the report form and resubmitting.
- If an error message appears after CAC has tried processing the progress report for a while, the system may be congested. Please:
 - Notify Web Support at (360) 902-5999.

- Wait a few hours or overnight. This will give time for the system to process the report, remove the link from the list of progress reports due and avoid multiple copies of the same report in the claim file.
- Verify that the report was posted to the claim file and the link removed.

VTSG received a draft handout of the Vocational Profile Utilization Report. This report summarized the reasons that were relevant to L&I staff when they selected a vocational provider. In general, L&I staff are consistently sending referrals to providers with high scores in the 8th or 9th decile groups. There is usually one reason identified for selecting a provider but occasionally 2 or more reasons are cited. The most common reasons are Useful Outcomes and Timeliness of Progress Reports. This applies to all referral types except Plan Development and Plan Implementation where “continuity” is the most common reason.

Comments and questions from VTSG included:

- When one worker has multiple claims, a single action (such submitting a Plan) is counted more than once in the Vocational Profile creating a data integrity issue.
- Could the order of indicators displayed on the screen influence the reason?
- This report is very useful and VTSG would like regular updates.

Reducing AWA Duration—AWA Lean Core Group Representatives

Rob Johnson, Tamra Shaefer and Nicole Clintsman, members of the AWA team talked about the new practices in making AWA referrals. These include making 4 point contact, clarifying expectations up front with all parties, monitoring referral progress to identify barriers. These activities are all aimed at the goal of closing AWA referrals in 90 days or less. The team reported they were receiving EVOC and phone calls from VRCs helping them to understand and respond to their referral problems. Based on questions from VTSG members, the team clarified that the emphasis on closing voc in 90 days is the goal, but that it is recognized that some claims will not resolve that quickly. Team members discussed the concept of Genba (meaning workplace) walks being the practice of managers visiting the lean units and asking about the process and how they could help remove barriers.

The team talked about some of the barriers that VRCs have brought to the attention of the claims manager. These include medical providers not responding to VRCs request for review of JAs and attorney- injured worker non-cooperation. The team encouraged VRCs to notify the claim manager or supervisor immediately when these situations arise.

Clarifying Requirements for AWA Closing Reports—Donna Spencer

The purpose of developing a standard AWA Eligible form is to clarify existing policies and information needed to support an eligible recommendation. It is expected that a standard format will:

- Increase approvable Eligible recommendations the first time submitted.
- Make it easier for 4th floor VSSs to review the report.
- Reduce delays in processing AWAs.

The department is ready to begin the stakeholder process of the new AWA Eligible form. We expect to obtain feedback by the end of January, pilot the form in February, and roll out the new form in March.

Action plan:

- Capture data on the percentage of Eligible AWAs not complete the first time.
- Revise the draft form based on feedback from VSS staff and VTSG
- Pilot the form. VRC volunteers will use the form and ask the other providers in their firm to use the form with Eligible AWAs. They will collect feedback for the AWA team to consider. VRCs who agreed to pilot the new form are April Poier, Todd Gendreau, Gail Vogel, Bradley Ehrlich, Cory Turner, Corrine Urrutia, and Cathy Cottingham.
- Revise the form based on feedback from the Pilot.
- Provide training on the new form.
- Post an example of the new format on the Internet.

VTSG broke into small groups to review the draft form and provided the following feedback:

Rationale:

- 1c. Broad issue, what does L&I want: Specific schools, Formal versus OJT training? Clarify and define “resources”
- 1b. Address likely to benefit with breakdown of physical, educational, psychological, and other concerns.
- 1d. Add reference to WAC in instructions and provide guidance on how to note non-compliance, non-cooperation (maybe address as a barrier later, etc.
- 1e. Change “Job Analysis” to “Job Analysis(s). Add signature line for VRC who wrote the report in addition to the Assigned VRC.
- Suggest changing wording from “worker participation” to “barriers” or “support or not support” training success. Clarify if L&I wants VRC recommendation that lack of worker motivation precludes plan development.

Medical:

- Ask L&I when is worker medically ready to go?
- 2f. Litigated section. Need more clarification on pre and post medical conditions.
- 2i. Add box for date of APF and PCE
- 2J. Add clarification regarding IME, PCE whether AP concurs, defers, does not respond, etc.

Vocational:

- Can VRCs add or delete boxes? Are boxes expandable? Tables could be uneven depending on the amount of information needed.
- 3b. Define “reasons job is not appropriate” Add column?
- Do we want duplicate jobs in different sections, i.e. job history list, transferrable skills jobs, rejected jobs, etc.
- 3c. “Reasons ruled out” LMS all contacts in table or only completed LMS?
- Add date of vocational testing.
- Add new money for older claims that need to be re-tested.
- Add box/column in education section: “was transcript obtained?” or integrate in comments.
- Can VRCs add or delete boxes? Are boxes expandable? Tables could be uneven depending on the amount of information needed.

Work History:

- Add “hourly wage”
- Can “describe actual job” be combined with “list duties”?
- Clarify sources for “required skills and abilities”
- Clarify difference between bullets 1 & 3.
- Can we use work history information in the file or recreate every time?
- Clarify bullet #4. How do we use reference material, i.e. Guide for Occupational Exploration and Dictionary of Occupational Titles.
- Add box for “physical demands”
- Add box for “potential transferrable skills”
- Clarify what is meant and how to document “gaps in work history”.
- Clarify importance of Job of Injury job application work history and how to obtain.
- Clarify how to document one job with one employer multiple times and add “comments” box to clarify these situations.

Next meeting is March 5, 2012 in Tukwila